

The Midwife.

A SCHOOL FOR MOTHERS IN PETROGRAD.

This month's *Englishwoman* contains an exhaustive article by Miss Violetta Thurstan on "The Refugees in Petrograd and Moscow." It is, of course, full of interest. Of the work of the Municipal Committee at Petrograd she says:—

"A most excellent piece of work done by the Municipal Committee is the opening of a School for Mothers, which is quite a new experiment for Russia, and was designed as a means of partially solving the problem of the terrible infant mortality. In other European countries the infant mortality is higher in the large industrial cities and lower in the more healthy country-districts. In Russia it is the reverse—the infant mortality is lower in the large towns and higher in the country; and this is because the women in the towns have more education, and know better how to bring up their children than the ignorant peasants, who still practise all kinds of superstitious horrors on their unfortunate babies. The School for Mothers is a resident Home for forty refugee mothers, where they are carefully taught the best way of rearing infants. They stay there for three months—one month before the birth of their child and for two months after it. Unfortunately, the house is not large enough, and they have not a sufficiently well-trained staff to allow of the birth of the child in the Home, so the mothers are obliged to go to one of the town maternity hospitals for their confinement. When they return they are carefully and minutely taught how to bathe, feed, dress, and weigh their child, and the great art of cleanliness is laboriously instilled into them. It is hoped by this means to diffuse a few basic facts of infant welfare among these people, who need the knowledge so badly.

"One of the nurses in the hospital told me that the babies were weighed eleven times a day. This really seemed like overdoing it, but the doctor explained this zeal. Many of the mothers have foster-children given them to feed as well as their own child. In order that their own baby shall have plenty they sometimes deny their milk to the strange baby, with the result that it pines away, while the other waxes fat and lusty. In order to prevent this, the babies are weighed immediately before and

after each meal, so that this trick is instantly discovered if anyone tries it on. The after-care of the child is not forgotten. When the mother leaves the hospital, the trousseau that she has been making for herself and baby is given to her, and many last rules and directions for its upbringing. One of the Sisters at the Home keeps an eagle eye on the mother to see if she is carrying out what was taught her, and visits her regularly at home, at first weekly, and then, if the child is doing well, every fortnight, till it is six months old. It is a great pity that this excellent institution can only touch such a very limited number of refugee women."

CARE OF INFANT LIFE.

At the recent Annual Meeting of the Norfolk Nursing Federation, presided over by the Countess of Albemarle, the Hon. Secretary, Mrs. Colman, reported that early in April she had received a grant of £85 from the Local Government Board, which was, however, only a third of the sum she applied for. At any rate, the grant forwarded was encouraging, and they hoped it might be taken as an earnest of future assistance. The fact that a grant had been made showed that the Local Government Board now recognised the midwifery work done by the Federation.

The Federation, which is evidently interested in midwifery, and no doubt is doing good work in this connection, should surely more properly be called a "Midwifery Federation," for a society composed of 53 affiliated local associations, employing at most seven fully-trained nurses cannot rightly be described as a nursing association. Here are the official figures:—

Queen's Nurses	..	..	3
Hospital Trained Nurses	..	..	4
Village Nurses	..	..	32
Cottage Trained Nurses	..	..	14
			—
			53

During the year 12 candidates were sent for training. One had broken down in health, 14 had completed training during 1915, and all passed the C.M.B. examination.

A feature of the meeting was an address by Dr. Nash, Medical Officer of Health for the County, who said that at the beginning of the present century many medical men, and not a few medical officers of health, did not realise what an enormous amount of wastage was going on in infant life, but since then there had been earnest investigators who had been carefully collecting, tabulating, and analysing statistics, and others who had searched further into the causes of infant disease and death, and we were gradually making progress.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)